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Report on Surplus Rural Labor

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The following are translations of selected articles from "Investigative Report on China's Surplus Rural Labor" published in ZHONGGUO QINGNIAN BAO [CHINA YOUTH DAILY] in Chinese 21-25 Feb 1994.

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Part I

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[Collection of essays: "An Investigative Report on China's Surplus Rural Labor Force; Exploring the Sources, Part I—Migratory Workers, Do You Know Where You Are Headed?"]

[Text] Editorial Note: According to scholars, in the modernization process, China's rural areas will have 120 million surplus workers who must be removed from their land. According to newspaper reports, more than 10 million civilian workers will move across regions during the Spring Festival this year. This huge mobile army will consist almost entirely of young people. It is inevitable that we are concerned about their fate, their struggle, and their tremendous effect on the Chinese society as it heads toward modernization.

ZHONGGUO QINGNIAN BAO reporters in five provinces in the east, west, north, south, and central parts of the fatherland have chosen five fairly typical administrative villages as the sources of migration and five cities as the "destinations" of migration and have combined sociology and journalism in conducting a serious investigation, and they have obtained initial results.

Beginning today, this paper will publish a series entitled "An Investigative Report on China's Surplus Rural Labor Force" to share the results with our readers. We hope to attract some attention and promote the development and maturity of appropriate new mechanisms.

Where the Migratory Cranes Gather—by reporter Dai Yuanzhi [2071 5913 2388]

In the hinterland of northern Jiangsu Province, at the junction of three of Yancheng City's counties—Funing, Jianhu, and Sheyang—lies a village called Dagang. Its nickname is "Share-a-Cigarette-With-Three-Counties." Reportedly, once upon a time there was a wealthy family that built high walls and dug a deep moat, and the village was named Dagang—big harbor—after the moat. At first it was but a grassy marsh with poor soil where only garlic grew, and so people also called it "Garlic Village." According to some old-timers, a Chen family originally from Suzhou's Lumen was "driven out by Hong Wu" and ended up there.

With the arrival of the swallows comes spring and the wild geese fall. Each year, flocks of cranes fly from the frozen north to coastal Yancheng to spend the winter. The migrant civilian workers return home several times a year, just like the migratory birds in their homeland.

Every year, in early summer, civilian workers who work south of the Changjiang River go back north to harvest wheat and transplant seedlings. Liu Xunjun [0491 6064 0193] also goes home to farm his own 3 mu of land.

Liu comes from Binhai County' Zhenghong Township, the hometown of the martyr, Gu Zhenghong. Liu graduated from junior high in 1983 and worked on the farm for two years, and that is why going back to the farm is nothing new to him. Last year, he went home and dug a 50-60 meter drain ditch in no time. The old peasants in the village even praised him, saying, "well, you've been away for a few years, but you're still good at digging ditches."

He went to Shanghai in 1988, repaired cables for half a year before deciding to go to Wuxi.

His three married brothers have set up separate households. At home, only his little sister is still around to keep his 60-some-year-old widowed mother company. Usually his mother and sister can handle the farm work, but during summer harvest and planting, there is wheat harvesting, threshing, tilling, irrigating, and transplanting to do, and during the autumn harvest and planting, there is harvesting, threshing, plowing, and wheat planting to do, and he cannot bear over-working his mother and little sister.

The workshop has implemented a contract system, and during the busy seasons, Liu Xunjun will either go on leave or arrange with his fellow workers to take over his work (in this way, his wages and bonuses will not be deducted), so he can spend 10 days or so to work back home. He lost 10 jin during the autumn sowing season in 1991. Only in this way can he keep his contracted responsibility farm from turning into wasteland, and only then can he make a thousand yuan or so away from home.

During the harvest season, he will return home to find the swallows that have been returning to his house for decades have already arrived from the south, and by the time harvest is over and the seedlings planted, the swallows will have already gone south again. He thinks to himself, "I too am but a migratory bird."

He is lucky. His brothers are willing to help; he can go home twice a year, and he can still keep his wages and bonuses. But Lu Ningdong [7627 1380 2639], who works with him, was not as lucky.

Lu used to work for a construction company. He took half a month off to go back home during the busy season. His group leader lost his request of absence, and his superiors took that to be an unexcused absence and docked him a month's wage plus 200 or 300 yuan from his year-end bonus. The group leader vouched for him but to no avail, and in his anger, he quit his job. At first, he couldn't even get his workman's deposit back. Someone showed him the way, and he went and bought a chicken, and only then could he get his money back.

"Their hearts are divided—they have to work away from home but tend to the family farm too." They are workers as well as peasants. Normally they are workers, but during the busy season they are peasants. They are like a

flock of migratory birds, changing with the seasons, running back and forth between their hometown and their place of work.

Today, not too far north of Liu's hometown, in Chendu Township across from northern Jiangsu's main irrigation ditch, 30 small village-level farms have been set up to centralize the land and implement collective contracting or concentrate the land in the hands of a few large farming households, so that people who are working away from home will not have to worry about their farms. Liu and his friends are envious.

Follow One's Instincts—by reporter Mao Hao [3029 3185]

Gouzi Village is located in the hilly part Qianqiu Prefecture of northeastern Sichuan. It is named after a buddhist temple, Guozi Temple (an elementary school today). The prominent families in the village are all originally from Huguang. There used to be a Huguang guild hall in Hengsheng Plaza. Guozi village used to produce an abundance of corn. At one time, Guangan county, to which the village belongs, was known as "Golden Guangan." Historically, the village was not particularly famous for anything, and its economy is not very prosperous; no famous names or events have ever been recorded in the county annals. Industrialist Liu Yanlin [0491 1693 2651] who started out as a hired-hand was elected to Sichuan Province's CPPCC last year, thus becoming the village's best-known celebrity.

According to this reporter's investigation, most civilian workers who leave home for the first time have never left Guangan County before; a large percentage have only gone as far as Hengsheng Town. When choosing their job locations, most people rely on information provided by friends and relatives plus their own impression from radio and television shows, and so we can say they are following their "instincts."

Forty-some-year old Feng Zhigang [7458 1807 0474] is a failed hired-hand. "I am heart-broken," said Feng, who is working on his family farm today. "My disadvantage is that I have no education, I have no brain. When people say something is round, I agree; when they say it is flat, I agree too." In 1986, the company commander of the village militia told him that money could be made transporting sand in Hunan, and so he went there. But by then, the state had stopped the excavations. Feng went there for nothing. "In 1987, I heard that money could be made in Hainan, and I borrowed money and hurried there, but by the time I got there, all the projects had been completed. I had to do odd jobs along the way to get myself home." In 1988, Feng went to Hainan again. This time he made 300 yuan, but the boss saw that he was an honest man and gave him a citation instead of real money. Today, sickly Feng sits before the reporter in dejection. He said, "I will never go out again."

A middle school student in the same village by the name of Xiao Guanghe [5135 0342 0678] had a similar experience. In 1984, 18-year-old Xiao heard from his cousin

that there was work in Guiyang. He had never stepped outside of Hengsheng before, but he was young and bold, and he headed out by himself only to find that things were very different from what he had expected. "It was a terrible year. I did not have enough money to get home. I took the bus to Wangqi and walked more than 100 li to get home."

But Xiao at least had some education. "Back then I watched a lot of television. Most news came out of Guangdong. My father-in-law's neighbor kept sending money back from over there. This time I made sure that the capital construction works had just begun before I headed out there. I made the peak construction season, and adding that I had some experience by then, I worked six years straight, and each year I was able to bring home several thousand yuan." Today, Xiao is a small labor contractor with 23-30 hired-hands of his own. He came home early this year to build a new house for himself. When talking about this year's plans, he sounds very "well-seasoned," "Guangdong is almost completely opened up. I think the big bosses are heading to Fujian, thinking that there will be massive construction work there. I have asked around. They have shifting sand there which makes construction difficult and requires special skills." So long as the labor market is underdeveloped and labor export to undertake large-scale complete construction projects is still impractical, naturally those in Guozi village will not be the only people to follow their "instincts."

The reporter has found that most of Guozi village's civilian workers who "follow their instincts" have more or less been given some information, and in this respect, their relatives play a very important role. There is a direct correlation between how accurate and timely the information and the closeness of the relatives from whom they obtain their news. Liu Yanlin is chairman of the board of Guangdong's Chuanhui Group, and out of the seven Liu families in his former brigade, eight people have gone to work in Guangdong, and although few directly work in Liu's company, because of their access to information, they tend to be more rational about their "instincts" and generally are more accurate and steady in making their choices. This perhaps is a characteristic of the flow of rural surplus labor in the early stage.

Crossing the Tangula—by reporter Sun Kai [1327 0418]

Gangu County was originally known as Fujiang. The county was created in Tang Dynasty; that is, it was created after conquering the Jiang people. Xinzhuang Village is situated in the valley in the better part of the county. The Weihe River flows by the village, and so the land is irrigated, but there are few farms.

The wind blows, the snow drifts.

On the world-renowned Qinghai-Tibet Highway, at 5,000 meter above sea-level, standing beside a truck loaded with cargo are a group of fur-clad men. In their midst stands a kerosene stove. Noodles—their lunch—are being cooked.

They are Huang Aisheng [7806 1947 3932] and his partners, all from Xinzhuan Village. They are going to Tibet to do business.

They hire a big truck in Gansu, fill it with clothing, food, and so on, go cross Qinghai Province and follow the Qinghai-Tibet Highway from Golmud into Tibet, and from there they go to Lhasa and Xigaze and other places to sell their goods. They make several trips a year. Huang Aisheng said, "It is easier to do business in Tibet than in the hinterland. If you don't mind hard work, you can easily make 10,000 yuan a year after expenses."

Huang said, "When we first came to Tibet, the lack of oxygen and the headaches alone were intolerable, not to mention other problems. In Golmud people warned us that Tibet was a dangerous place. They said that once they took a bus from Lhasa to Golmud, and it broke down half-way. The smart ones spent some money and hired another car, but most people thought that they had already paid the bus fare and if they left, they would be throwing money away plus they would have to pay again. So they sat down and waited for the bus to be repaired. Little did they expect that by night-fall the bus was still not repaired, and they had to spend the night on the bus. The night was cold and the air was thin. What a murderous night."

Huang said, "It is not easy to make money. When we first came to Tibet, the language alone posed a real problem. Every night I tried to learn the Tibetan language from the natives. Good thing that these minority races are very friendly and very warmhearted people. Both the Tibetan nationality and the Uygur nationality with whom I did business earlier in Xinjiang are very friendly people. Today I can speak two minority nationality languages—Uygur and Tibetan. Another problem is the customs outposts along the way. If you are stopped, you will have to pay up or you are going nowhere. Once I was stopped at a Qinghai customs outpost. They saw that Gansu's customs had already collected all the necessary fees, but they said their rates were too low and made me pay more."

The villagers said that years ago, Huang used to carry grain from Shaanxi to Gangu and was once arrested by the militia at the train station. Later he worked as a hired-hand in a construction site. He even worked as a street vendor in Xinjiang. He has done many things.

Huang said, "We peasants can endure all kinds of hardship, suffer all kinds of punishment. So long as we can make some money and have a better life, we are willing to do anything and work anywhere. Of course, we won't do anything illegal."

Many of Xinzhuan Village's peasants have gone to Xinjiang and Tibet instead of the coastal areas. This is rather puzzling. But to them it is the logical thing to do: "It is difficult for people like us to adjust to the developed regions. But the backward areas are a different story. For one thing, we more or less share a common language, and for another thing, life is tougher here, and

people from the well-developed areas seldom come here, and so there are more opportunities for us."

**Following in the Old-Timers' Footsteps—by reporter
Liu Jian [0491 0256]**

Like numerous other natural villages in northern China, Liujiaguanfang, a small village at the edge of the Yimang mountain area, was, according to legend, moved from beneath a large Chinese Scholar tree from Shanxi's Hongdong County during Ming Dynasty's Hongwu Year. Most people (except for the women) have the same last name, Liu. According to the "Liu Family Annals," revised in the eighth year of Xianfeng of the Qing Dynasty, the Liu ancestors had come from Haizhou, south of the Changjiang River.

Liu Hengyun [0491 1854 6663] has gone to the northeast to visit his sons. His sons are working in the coal mines in Heilongjiang's Qitaihe coal mines. Last autumn, the elder son married a local girl. The old man has gone especially to visit his son's new home.

Traveling a thousand li to visit family—this is quite common among villagers from Liujiaguanfang.

Shandong's peasants have this famous saying, "Old people do not venture north; young people do not head down south." It means that old people do not go to the northeast, because coolies come from there; it is not a place for old people. Young people should not go down south, because it is a place full of temptations where young people can easily be tricked or corrupted. For hundreds of years, Shandong's peasants have traditionally stayed in the three northeastern provinces. In the first 30 years after the founding of the PRC, Shandong transferred out 162,000 people each year, mostly to the northeast, especially Heilongjiang. This did not include the temporary migrant workers who did not move their households but would travel back and forth.

Today, 80 percent of Liujiaguanfang Village's young men under 25 years old have been to the northeast. Of course, they have gone out and have returned. But of those who have left and never to return, scores of families and nearly a hundred descendants of Liujiaguanfang villagers can be found in Heilongjiang's Qitaihe City alone.

When Liu Zaitian [0491 0961 3944] and Liu Hanying [0491 3352 5391] were living in Liujiaguanfang last year, their homes were 50 meters apart. Today, they are living in Qitaihe City, and their homes are only 5 meters apart. In the 500 square meters around their homes, there are 11 families originally from Liujiaguanfang.

Liujiaguanfang is my hometown. At 17, my father twice went to the Qitaihe coal mines and once to the Bianhe oil fields. The fourth time he headed east of Shanaiguan, he already had four children at home. My eldest aunt's family is scattered in Yichun, Shangzhi, and Musuo in Heilongjiang. My youngest aunt lives in Jilin. My uncle

also wandered throughout Heilongjiang when he was a teenager. My five uncles have all been east of Shanhaiguan.

Many people eventually move away after drifting back and forth. In 1993, seven people from three Liujiaguanfang families moved to Heilongjiang and Jilin permanently.

Today, it is no longer true that "only one way leads east of Shanhaiguan." In recent years, Jiaodong Peninsula has become one big construction site, and in the prefecture where Liujiaguanfang is located, the prefectural capital Linyi has become a commercial center. The demand for labor has increased significantly, and the flow of labor force has therefore branched out. In addition, one of the villagers has become an assistant manager is a labor service company, and a succession of 13 of his neighbors have joined the organized labor export team. They go east, west, north, and everywhere. Liu Tianchao [0491 3944 6389] and Liu Shun [0491 7311], the two brothers, are in Qitaihe, and their little sister is working in a joint venture enterprise in Tianjin as a physical health instructor.

When men braved the journey to the northeast in the old days, women never joined in. Today, the flow has branched out in all directions. Almost all of Liujiaguanfang's single women have left. Most have gone to Yantai's Changdao County to help raise fish.

Going to the Edge of the World for Greener Pastures—by reporter Lu Yuegang [4151 6460 0474]

From Nanchang south 80 km to the famous "medicine capital" Zhangshu City and then across the Gongjiang River and head south for another 46 km is Huangtugang County's Huxia Village by the river Mengshui. This is a typical rural administrative village, with its rolling hills and hillocks at the edge of the Poyanghu plains. It is comprised of six natural villages. Its planting industry emphasizes two crops of rice each year and a crop of peanuts. It is named "Huxia Village" because it is situated at the lower reach of Jianhu lake.

Only 35 people have left Huxia village to work elsewhere. This is not a large number compared to the town's other villages. Sixty percent of Tuohu Village's and 56 percent of Huangjia village's workers have left. Most of them have gone to Shenzhen and Ningbo.

To almost-30-year-old Zou Xiaolan [6760 1420 5695], going to work in Ningbo has nothing to do with her wanting to see the world. Zou Binzi [6760 2430 0098] told me that she is the kind of spirited woman who is fed up with the rural custom of paying bride-price. She said, "I am not a pig or a dog." In choosing a husband, her standard is that he must be educated and that the two must be able to communicate in spirit. The purpose of her going to work in the city is clear. She wants to be independent. To reach this goal, she is willing to endure setbacks, hardship, fatigue, and discrimination by the city people.

Where can she go? To a rural society cut off from the outside world, information about work availability has to come mainly from good friends and relatives. This is also one of the main reasons why most of Huxia Village's surplus labor is still working on the land. Going away sounds very attractive to them. The numbers all add up: Even in Shenzhen or Zhejiang's Ningbo, if one is frugal, an ordinary skilled worker can easily take home a net of 2,000 to 3,000 yuan a year after paying for living expenses. This point alone makes it impossible for many to be "so attached to home as to be unwilling to leave it," even if it means taking a chance.

Huangtugang's county party committee secretary, Du Shuiyuan [2629 3055 3293], specifically went to the post office to find out about remittances in 1993 and learned that at least 15,000 yuan was remitted each day, and not including the amount people brought home with them, this was a sum of 6 million yuan, 30 times the county's total revenue. Du Shuiyuan told me that not long ago, the director of the prefectural policy research department came to Huangtugang to study the issue of rural surplus labor, and after checking with the post office and credit cooperatives, it was found that so far, the peasant workers who worked away from home had made 13.70 million yuan.

This is in sharp contrast to the kind of income generated by agriculture.

The grass is greener on the outside. Where can people go to make money and settle down? This is a question every able-bodied person in Huxia Village is wondering about day and night.

Map Showing the Flow of Rural Labor From Five Administrative Villages

Gansu: Xinzhuan Village's surplus labor heads for Lanzhou, Xinjiang, Guangdong, Baoji, Henan, and Shanghai.

Shandong: Liujiaguanfang Village's surplus labor heads for the Northeast, Beijing, Tianjin, Wuxi, Liangyungang, and throughout Shandong Province.

Jiangsu: Dagang Village's surplus labor heads for Wuxi, Suzhou, and Shanghai and so on.

Jiangxi: Huxia Village's surplus labor heads for Shenzhen, Ningbo, Nanchang, Beijing, and nearby counties and cities.

Sichuan: Guozi Village's surplus labor heads for Guangdong, Xinjiang, the Northeast, throughout Sichuan, Hainan, and Fujian.

Part II

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[Collection of essays in reportage: "An Investigative Report on China's Surplus Rural Labor Force; Exploring the Sources, Part II—The Land That Cannot Bear More Burdens?"]

[Text] **Can Grain and Hogs Keep Peace on Land Under Heaven**—by reporter Mao Hao [3029 3185]

Last winter, Chengdu was bubbling over with the high tide of grain price increases. However, everything was quiet at the Hengsheng township, Guangan county, which was several kilometers away from Chengdu. Guangan is a famous granary in northern Sichuan. Our reporter visited the Guozi village of the township. Along the road, what he saw were plots of paddy fields. Peasants had stored water for winter a long time ago. They only wish to grow one season of grain crops next year.

Just like in any hilly district in northern Sichuan, 90 percent of the young people in Guozi village left the village to work somewhere else. The average age of those left behind was 51 years old. Liu Benren, Secretary of the village's party branch, said: "People always wish to live a better life, while water always flows downward. Who can tie up their feet?"

He has four sons and two daughter-in-laws working in other provinces. He himself stays behind to do farming for eight persons. "I was really upset during the busy farming season. I plan to call one daughter-in-law back next year. However, which one should I call? That is a good question," he said. In that village, calling a young worker back means a considerable loss of income.

In many areas of northern Sichuan, traditional farming (particularly grain production) has become a "sideline production" aimed at providing basic grain for peasants' own consumption, fulfilling the task in grain production and making payments for agricultural tax and public welfare funds and other expenses. He calculated as follows: On the presumption that he reaps two harvests of crops a year. The per-mu yield of paddy rice is 1,000 jin and that of wheat 300 jin. He would receive about 480 yuan for each mu of farm produce. Only 180 yuan is left after he deducts 240 yuan of production costs, 60 yuan for tax (not including miscellaneous expenses). "That is why peasants say that farming would only give peasants rice crusts instead of rice," he added. Our reporter visited the Hengsheng post office and found out that the average per capita annual income of a villager working outside is approximately 2,500 yuan.

It seems that Heaven itself makes special arrangements for the Guozi village to engage in farming. The gray, brown and purple soil in its Shaqimiao area is extremely fertile and good in retaining moisture and fertility. The climate is mild around the village with an annual precipitation of 1,050 ml, 1,246 hours of sunshine time and

320 days free of frost. There was a saying in history about "gold Guangan and silver Yuechi" (which means the local bumper harvest of millet and paddy rice). Thus, the saying that "grain and hogs can keep peace on land under heaven" has always been a local creed that make people sincerely convinced.

Nevertheless, this creed is no longer useful. For the past 40 years since liberation, particularly since the implementation of the system of production contracted to the household in 1981, peasants in the Guozi village have greatly emancipated the productive forces by carrying out farming with a scientific approach. The per-unit yield of grain (paddy rice) in 1985 registered a five-fold increase over 1949. The fact that increases in production, but not income, has made peasants worriless about food and clothing, but they can hardly become rich. Prior to the exodus of a large number of labor force, the per capita income of villagers in the Guozi village was wavering, for eight years, around 400 yuan which is just enough to cover food and clothing only.

Slack farming season is a good time for building new houses. About 20 percent of the families in the village have built new houses since 1989. The majority of the families have people working outside. On one occasion, our reporter met Xiao Guanghe who just came back from Guandong. He worked as a small contractor with a net monthly income of 2,000 yuan (He does not have work to do every month.) Right now, he is planning to build a 30,000-yuan new house. According to the local customs, men have to leave their family and live separately after reaching adulthood. Therefore, they often leave their hometown to start their new life. Their parents often cannot afford to support them from their meager farming income. It was under this condition that Xiao Guanghe left the village with a 400 yuan debt from his marriage. He paid back what he owed in the first year right after he started working outside.

The loss of creditability of the grain-hog creed is even more clear on the issue of land. In the past, there were always disputes among peasants on the uneven distribution of responsibility fields. Now nobody is willing to accept any farming assignment. In order to avoid any penalty for leaving the farmland idle, old people and women often take over the responsibility for farming. Anyone who wishes to sub-contract a mu of farmland for farming, he or she has to pay 50 yuan per mu of farmland to the one who accepts the responsibility for farming. Someone pointed at a plot of dry land which was lying idle to our reporter, saying that the person supposed to till this piece of land is an orphan. He left the village and worked outside for many years now. No one is paying any tax so far.

Liu Huaifu left the village and worked outside a year ago. He is now the deputy manager of the engineering command of the Chuanhui Group in Guangdong. Perhaps because he is educated, he can do a better job in doing calculation. In 1993, he straightforwardly bought grain from a supply and marketing cooperative and turned it over the state and considered his obligation to till his responsibility farmland as completely fulfilled.

**A String Cannot Hold—by reporter Sun Kai
[1327 0418]**

The first person our reporter visited in the Xinzhuang village was Huang Junfang, who ranked quite low in the Huang clan in terms of seniority.

From her outward appearance, Huang Junfang was entirely different from the village girls that our reporter met in the village. She wore a pair of ankle boots, a pair of jeans and a fashionable coat and had a fine hair style. In the Xinzhuang village, Gangu county, this 20-year old girl spoke Mandarin with a mixture of Guangdong and Gansu accents. She said: "What I cannot stand here is the lack of changes. Everything here remains the same as when I was a child." After graduating from a junior middle school three years ago, Huang Junfang went to Dongguan, Guangdong Province, and worked in a woolen textile mill. She just returned home to spend her new year here.

Our reporter talked to many young people in the village. They shared Huang Junfang's views.

People did farming scores of years ago just like their grandparents and parents. They still carry out farming in the same way.

Dozens of years ago, the narrow streets in the village were full of mud on rainy days. They are still full of mud on rainy days today.

Scores of years ago, the toilet in their house was concurrently used as a pig sty. It was so dirty that one could hardly put one's feet down. It is still the same way now.

Naturally, now they have enough to eat, and they can eat white bread and meat regularly. Many people can also watch television. However, as far as the young people are concerned, they are not satisfied.

After graduating from a junior or senior middle school, what can they do at home? Tilling a small plot of farmland is no fun either. Therefore, they just loved to loaf around. Fortunately there is the billiard. They spend a great deal of time in the billiard room. The millionaires in the developed countries will be shocked if they visit the most backward countryside in China, because they would discover that this kind of gentlemen's game is everywhere in China's rural areas. They would perhaps see an unkempt peasant using a cue to hit the balls just as dexterously as those bigshots in a television program.

However, young people still seek to leave the village! The per capita 0.3 mu of farmland to each person is a harsh reality which pushes the young people out of the village to look for a new and better life somewhere else.

Huang Junfang said: "It is only when I am outside that I realize that what kind of a poor life did I live before. It is just like what the song describes—the world outside is wonderful. Right now I earn more than 1,000 yuan a month in Dongguan. In addition to what I give to my family, I can still buy clothing and other things for myself."

"I already have many friends in Dongguan. They teach me to speak Cantonese. Sometimes we went out to sing Karaoke. I feel that my life there is very happy. Right now, each time I come home to spend the new year, I feel uncomfortable. Everything is not right. I am no longer accustomed to this kind of environment," she added.

"There was a girl in the neighboring village. She is a senior middle school graduate. She is good in English. When she went to Dongguan, she worked as a temporary English teacher in a school. Later, she stopped teaching because of her heavy Gansu accent. However, she met another teacher in the same school and married him. Now she has a son, leading a happy life. Once she visited us, and all of us admire her immensely," she continued.

Looking at Huang Junfang, our reporter asked her: "Would you like to settle down there and never come back again?"

"I like to do so, but whether or not I can achieve this goal is another question," she replied.

**One Cannot Afford To Build a House If One Needs To Feed Oneself by Farming—by reporter Liu Jian
[0491 0256]**

Moving, an immigrant's aspiration, seems to have been instilled into the gene of Liu's offsprings. Even during the 30 odd years in which the system of household registration was mostly strictly implemented in China's history, villagers of the Liujiaguanfang Village had persistently left the village and moved to other localities. Gradually less people moved out of the village after land division in 1981 until the mid-1980s, because there were high yields of crops several years running, the price of grain was higher than that of industrial products, and peasants earned more money by growing crops. In addition, there was neither fund-raising nor fund retention for other miscellaneous expenses. Nor was there any "movement." Another peak of labor force exodus took place between 1986 and 1987, because the pressure for subsistence had once again increased.

In the vicinity of the Liujiaguanfang Village, peasants generally grow one season of wheat and one season of peanuts. A village cadre calculated in such a way. Suppose a mu of farmland yields 200 kg of peanuts a year (this output is already fairly high) and the net income from this will be 700 yuan. Peasants need to invest a minimum of 70 yuan for chemical fertilizer, 20 yuan for insecticide, 20 yuan for plastic film, 60 yuan for seeds and 20 yuan for tractor plowing. Again suppose the per-mu yield of wheat is 175 kg (this output is already fairly high) and the net income of this will be 140 yuan. Peasants need to spend 10 yuan for tractor plowing, 20 yuan for seeds, 10 yuan for sowing, 55 yuan for chemical fertilizer and 10 yuan for insecticide. By adding and subtracting the aforementioned income and expenses and deducting 6.5 yuan for land tax and 200 yuan for the grain which peasants need to consume themselves, the net income will be approximately 340 yuan. After the mid-80s, a "two fields system" was introduced. The

per-capita 1.5 mu of farmland was split into 0.8 mu of farmland planted with grain for peasants' own consumption and 0.7 mu of high-priced farmland which was taxed 100 yuan per mu. If these expenses were deducted and funds were retained for miscellaneous expenses, the annual net income from each mu of farmland would be less than 200 yuan.

This was entirely unthinkable ten years ago. An old man recalled that a bag of compound fertilizer which he paid 70 yuan now only cost 18 yuan at that time. A bag of ammonium bicarbonate made in the United States which he paid more than 90 yuan now only cost 36 yuan at that time. There was no high-priced farmland which we need to pay 100 yuan per mu as land money. Peasants only needed to pay land tax no matter what kind of land it was. The prices for insecticide, and electricity are up. So is the amount of retention for public welfare funds and miscellaneous expenses.

The highest price increase is wedding. The old custom of having a family of three or four different generations living under the same roof is already smashed to pieces. No girl is going to marry someone who cannot afford independent housing. Even matchmakers would find all doors shut if the prospective bridegroom has no house of his own. Straw huts with earth-filled walls are out of fashion long time ago. Only bridegrooms with houses built of tiles and bricks and with glass windows will be considered. No matter how poor a bridegroom is, he must have a house of high standards, otherwise he would remain a bachelor for a long time. Several years ago, one must pay 5,000 yuan for a good house. Now standards are becoming higher and higher, and the building materials are becoming more and more expensive. Now it would cost at least 10,000 yuan to build a house. Another 10,000 yuan are needed to pay for the wedding expenses. If the young people in the village were not hard pressed by the 20,000 yuan they need to get married, there would be less young people leaving.

College and military service are the two ways for young people to distinguish themselves. During the 13 years between 1981 and 1993, 12 young people from the Liujiaguanfang Village passed examinations and entered

colleges and graduate schools. More than 100 years before, the most educated person in the Liujiaguanfang was Liu Songsheng, sometimes called Yuezhong or Junfeng, who was a candidate for the lowest degree under the former civil service examination in 1851 during the Qing Dynasty. The only goal to study is to enter a college. (People in Liujiaguanfang regard postgraduate, undergraduate and polytechnic school students as "college students.") All of them belong to a higher class. As for those children who are not so bright and whose academic standards are low, parents usually dragged them to do farming as soon as they finish their primary school education. If they have the slight hope to pass the college examination, the parents would economize on food and clothing to let them continue to study. When they fail one examination, they would attend revision classes for another year. If they failed again, they would attend revision class for another year.... Among the 12 college students, only one of them got into college as soon as he graduated from the senior middle school. All others had to repeat classes or attended revision classes from one to five years before they passed the college entrance examination. That means they had to attend the college entrance examination from two to six times. One of them had to transfer his household registration to Qihetai in Heilongjiang Province, because the standard is much lower there and he had a better chance to pass the college entrance examination.

Many of the young people in the Liujiaguanfang village serve in the army, but few of them ever came back to resume farming again. They often worked hard to distinguish themselves after joining the army. Even if they do not become cadres, they would work hard to win the title of "volunteers." In short, they try one thousand and one ways to change their rural residence registration to a city or other non-rural resident registration.

Between 1992 and 1993, city or "other nonrural resident registration" is on sale everywhere in the village. A Linyi resident registration was worth 5,000 yuan, and that of Junan resident registration 3,000 yuan. In 1993, five villagers of the Liujiaguanfang village used this simple but quick way to move to the city.

Table (II) (By village)

Item	Liujiaguanfang Village, Shandong Province	Xinzhuan Village, Gansu Province	Huxia Village, Jiangxi	Guozi Village, Sichuan Province	Dagang Village, Jiangsu Province
population	1,115	1,406	1,065	1,119	1,768
per capita farmland	1.5 mu	0.32 mu	1.76 mu	0.87 mu	1.1 mu
Degree of Mechanization	24 tractors	0	3 small trucks	power equipment for farming 170 horse power and irrigation power equipment 315 kw	
Total Manpower	400	350	633	771	980
Floating Manpower	210	over 300	35	310	200

**Family of a Runaway From Marriage—by Lu Yaogang
[4141 6460 0474]**

I finally met Zou Binzi. When I hurriedly entered the old, shabby waiting room at the Nanchang Railway Station on 4 January this year, it was already 2000 hours in the evening. I saw this dark and lean young man sitting there and reading a READERS magazine. He was just like a needle in the haystack which I just picked up.

Zou Benzi was born in the Huxia Village. I stayed in his house for eight days. I could see that his honest and sincere parents did not know the true reason for my visit. Nor did they know that their smart son Benzi had gone to Beijing to look for a job in order to runaway from a marriage which they had arranged for him earlier. Benzi was new in Beijing. He slept under the Jianguomen Overpass at night and looked for job during the daytime. It was a freezing early spring. Running out of cash, Benzi was in a desperate position. He was hungry and cold. He wandered around on the streets in Beijing for ten days. He was mentally on the verge of a total collapse. It was at the time that our newspaper's "Hotline for Young People" saved him on time.

In rural areas, parents also do not lead an easy life. Benzi has a family of seven including two elder brothers, one younger sister and one younger brother. His two elder brothers got married and moved out. So was his sister. The next one in line for marriage is Benzi himself. However, Benzi who just left the army did not want to get married according to his parents' wish. He just ran away, although his parents had already paid 3,200 yuan as betrothal gifts to the bride-to-be, with their son disappeared and the bride-to-be family refusing to return the betrothal gifts according to a village custom, the parents poured out endless grievances.

There were six villagers' groups and 253 families in the Huxia Village. All villagers were of three surnames—Zou, Fu and He. Zou Benzi's family belongs to the lower middle class in terms of living standards. Three thousand two hundred yuan is an astronomical figure! Now the money is gone forever. Price changes every year for wedding. If a man does not have 10,000 yuan now, he has little chance to get married. Zou Pinzi's family has five mu of paddy rice field and three mu of upland field. In 1993, a natural calamity hit the farmland sown with early rice. The family only harvested 4,500 jin of paddy rice, 400 jin of peasants, 70 jin of soybean, more than 30 jin of sesame and over 100 jin of rape seeds. When all accounts were settled, the family's net income from farming was only 1,000 yuan after all the expenses were deducted (not counting the labor cost). Although the purchasing price for 100 jin of grain changed from over 20 yuan to 40 yuan, peasants in the vicinity of the Poyang lake only have a slight surplus from their double-crop paddy rice, even if they have engaged in meticulous farming, and weather is good for the crops. More serious is the fact that no one can prevent the price of the agricultural producer goods from increasing. These price increases would cut the small amount of surplus even

further. The possibility for peasants to become well-to-do is almost zero. Relying on his dexterity, Zou Benzi's father has a sideline job of gathering and selling goose feather during the slack farming season, and earns about 1,000 yuan to help the family pay bills. However, he can only save about 200 to 300 yuan after paying all the expenses and putting aside enough money for preparing farming for the next year. Then, how many years they have to work hard in order to save enough money to help Benzi get married?

Under the light of a dim kerosene lamp, Benzi's mother said to our reporter with a sigh: "There is nothing our family can do to help Benzi any more in this connection. Let the brothers go out and blaze their trail."

Nevertheless, Zou Benzi also clearly understands that although he has finally attained his parents' understanding and extricated himself from the prearranged wedding, he has not completely broken away from his predicament in subsistence. This is the main reason for him to leave the village and work outside. That was precisely the topic he talked about most when he made a special trip from Guangdong's Kaiping City to see me.

World in Southern Jiangsu Is Wonderful—by Dai Yuanzhi [2071 5913 2388]

No highway leads to the village. Nor is there any telephone in the village. One must cross the two main rivers in Southern Jiangsu—the Tongyu River and the Chuanchang River, in order to go to the Goudun Township in Funing County where the village is. It takes 90 minutes to travel from Nanjing to Beijing by ship. However, it takes 70 minutes to ride the only private-owned passenger boat to travel from the village to the township.

With an opportune chance, Chen Liang, a young man of the Jieyu villagers' group of the Dagang Village of the Goudun Township in Funing County, Jiangsu, left his home village which was surrounded by water on three sides in the spring of 1993, travelled to Southern Jiangsu, arrived in the flourishing city of Wuxi, and worked in a state-owned factory.

A year ago, our reporter, under a moonlight, rode his bicycle along a narrow path and crossed two rivers and came to visit Chen Liang's family.

It was a quiet night in winter in the countryside. A thick layer of frost like snow settled on the ground. We smoked, drank tea and talked informally.

"Our village is always in the red. However, documents show that the 1993 per-capita net income in the village is 920 yuan. Sometimes, it is said to be over 800 yuan. (Some people said it was only 400 to 500 yuan, while others said 900 yuan.) In 1992, the village reported its

per-capita net income to the high level as 750 yuan. The report failed to pass the township level. Finally, it was agreed to be 880 yuan."

Villagers who surrounded the reporter calculated as follows: There are 1,950 mu of farmland, power equipment for farming totaling 170 horsepower and power pumps for water drainage totaling 315 kw in the whole village. There are 980 able-bodied peasants in the village, but only 500 peasants are needed for farming. There is a surplus labor of 480 people.

A villager said: "A person who works outside can earn 1,000 to 2,000 yuan a month. Most of the young people like to work outside and earn more money."

Chen Liang's family of six (including the grandmother they support) takes care of 10.6 mu of farmland. It raises some hogs and chickens. It also has a hand-driver tractor, a boat with a 12-horsepower motor and a rice mill. The family is considered as doing well in the village.

However, Chen Liang's father said, I would have left the village long ago, if I have no facilities like these. I am someone who looks good in appearance, but lacks cash at home. My net income is several thousand yuan, but the money is never in my hands. People owe me money, and there is nothing I can do about it. When I went to the southern part of the Yangtze River last year, I really wanted to leave the village. If I work hard outside for a year, I would have cash on hand.

He said that right now, Chen Liang and his sister are working in Lucun, Wuxi. One works as a "peasant-turned contract worker" at the state-run Xinsu Machinery Plant, while the other works as a "contract worker" at a workshop in the Textile Varieties Research Institute. After the Spring Festival Chen Liang is going to send his younger sister to Wuxi. If there are suitable jobs and a place to live, he (Chen Liang's father) and his wife also plan to leave the village and work outside, and let the grandparents take care of their home.

Driven by the financial benefits, over 200 of the 480 surplus men and women are working in other provinces, and more than 100 of them are working as temporary workers outside. With the development of the market economy today, the manpower is being used in close connection with tools of production [sheng chan gong ju 3932 3934 1562 0367] and objects of labor [lao dong dui xiang 0525 0520 1417 6272] according to the principle of market allocation. The export of labor force is perhaps one of the ways to help a less developed area become well-to-do.

Part III

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[Collection of essays: "An Investigative Report on China's Surplus Rural Labor Force; Exploring the Sources, Part III—Can They Leave Home But Not Their Roots?"]

[Text] Toil for Six Months, Idle for Six Months—by Lu Yaogang [4141 6460 0474]

Huxia village is right next to the Zhegan railroad and the Qingping highway and Huangcha highway; it is very accessible. The county party committee secretary Du Shuiyuan [2629 3055 3293] told me that Huangtugang is considered a poor town in Zhangshu City and Yichun Prefecture, but compared to the rest of the county, Huxia Village is average in development. On the days I was there, it was in the midst of the pig-slaughtering season, but it was quiet everywhere. I was told by the villager that it is easier to go to town to buy pork than to raise pigs.

Villager Zou Liuya [6760 2696 5370] has a family of four. They only eat meat at New Years and on special occasions. On the day I visited, his house was filled with the aroma of meat cooking. He uncovered the piping-hot pan and said, "This is someone's dead pig. It died of some disease and was buried. I just dug it up." He said it is the luck of the poor—they can eat anything and will never get sick from it. How many in Huxia are living like Zou Liuya?

The villagers say things are much better for the last decade or so. Prior to 1977, Menghe River which passes through the village overflowed almost every year, and in bad years, one could earn only a few cents for full-time work. But two things have changed things around. In 1977, massive water conservancy and capital construction work was undertaken. Back then, Qingjiang County (renamed Zhangshu County in October 1988) made a vigorous effort to straighten out Menghe River and built a large dam, radically solving the flood problem. Secondly, after the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Party Central Committee, family-based farm allotment was implemented, which at last gave the people enough to eat and to keep warm. But a decade later, Huxia village's people are still just "fed and warm" but have made no further progress. There has been no increase in farmland, but population has increased and the labor force has increased. Huxia's village party committee estimated that of the village's 633 workers, at least one-third are surplus and the other two-thirds are farm workers who "toil half a year and sit idle half a year." Can any village absorb a labor force nearly half of which is idle?

After land was allotted to individual households, the tractors and other machinery and equipment owned by the original collectives were sold. Every family, no matter how poor, now keep oxen, and people keep to the old traditional farming methods and mix of crops. Besides a small amount of rearing and breeding (a fish pond, 60-some pigs, and 50-odd cattle) and the three families that make sugar (and brew rice wine at the same time), there is no other sideline production. At one time, people grew fruit trees on a fairly large scale, but because of theft, damages, and mismanagement, they failed. It is fair to say that the land has reached beyond its limits.

Huangtugang town has a labor force of 11,900 but only 13 township enterprises of different sizes which can only accommodate a little more than 2,000 people. More than half of the town's surplus workers are working out of town. Because of uneven regional economic development and various limitations in the township enterprises, it is not likely that the town can absorb more of the rural surplus labor in the near future so that the people can leave the land without leaving their homes.

To Huxia village, poverty is not only a consequence, it is also the cause of deterioration in the community. Standing on the river bank, one can see the pigs and the cows boldly munching on rape and the vegetables. Rats run amuck in the village. But from the county party committee secretary to the average villagers, they all tell me that one of the reasons they cannot destroy the rats is that people may use killing rats as an excuse to settle private scores and poison their neighbors' chickens and ducks. Even worse are the high cost of getting married, the concept of freedom of love and marriage, and the closed community life. Since 1982, Huxia village have ignored a thousand-year-old taboo and have allowed marriages within the same clan and between families of the same surname. This trend has taken off, and since 1982, 15 young couples have married. What will happen in the future? What will be the consequences?

Enterprises' Broken Dreams—by reporter Mao Hao [3029 3185]

Once Guozi village's 28-year-old Mayor Bo asked me, "Is a place without mountains, without water, and without roads like ours doomed to be poor forever?" This question sums up the concern shared by every person in the hilly countries which make up more than 60 percent of Sichuan's total area.

Actually I have learned in Guangan that like the rest of the country, there have been several rounds of township enterprise craze here, but they failed every time, leaving many unfinished projects with very few benefits. I checked Hengsheng town's enterprise list and discovered that most are brick factories and breweries. Only this kind of enterprises that requires little investment and can sell their products locally can survive. The town party committee's secretary Jiang was talking on the town government's only local battery telephone while telling me that, "In the past, occasionally someone would think about opening a plant here, but after they looked at the communications system and the roads, and they looked at the food and lodgings here, they left. Today, we are doing work of the 1990's but using equipment of the 1950's."

Hengsheng holds an open-air market three times a week, and on market day, villagers from Guozi village will come to town early in the morning, carrying their goods in baskets at the ends of their bamboo poles and walking for an hour (the highway is not finished). Prior to 1989, this was their only source of sideline income. The development of Hengsheng's country market is very

incongruent with its population of 36,000, and its service industry especially is out of step. In the beginning I wondered why the vegetables in the restaurants in the rural towns are more expensive than that in the county towns. Later I learned that people here still have the habit of eating only what is in season. If cabbage is in season, everybody eats cabbage, and if turnips are in season, everybody eats turnips, and if you want something different, you will have to go out to buy it, which naturally will cost more. A noodle shop owner complained, "It is hard to take precious money from the villagers' pockets!" Thus, Hengsheng town which is so close to the highway and could have made some money from the travelers is losing out; the townspeople would rather spend a few more hours on the road to get back to town even late at night.

Last year, Mayor Bo was all ambitious about opening a noodle factory to fill the vacuum, because Guozi village had no enterprise. But after looking around, he was completely discouraged. Guozi village has a poor transportation system; its products can only be sold in nearby localities, but the neighboring localities have a rich tradition of being self-sufficient and have little purchasing power anyway, so who is going to buy their noodles?

This is a vicious cycle. They are poor, and so they cannot afford to build infrastructure, and without infrastructure, there is no investment and no project, and without money and project, they cannot vigorously develop township enterprises, and without township enterprises, there is no place for the surplus labor to go, and if the productive forces cannot be put to use, purchasing power will decline, and in turn the economy cannot keep going, and so everybody stays poor. In recent years, some more fortunate localities (such as Guangan's Hua and Yuechi) have been able to take advantage of their natural resources to break this vicious cycle. But for a hilly area like Guozi village, prior to 1989, it seemed they would never get out of this strange endless circle. Thus, when Liu Yanlin [0491 1693 2651] and Shao Yuanshou [6730 0337 1108] left town, in fact they were paving a new way by creating a chain of workers-for-hire. That is, people can use the most primitive capital—labor—to earn their initial fund, skills, and experience.

When I was in Guizi village, Secretary Liu and Mayor Bo were working on opening another brick factory. "Many people are building houses nowadays. Selling the bricks is no problem. We lack capital, but we have sent a letter to Boss Liu asking him to invest some money here." I wish them luck with their enterprise dream.

Northern Jiangsu and Southern Jiangsu in Sharp Contrast—by reporter Dai Yuanzhi [2071 5913 2388]

Dagang village is situated in the town of Goudun. In the office of the town government, young Comrade Zhang, in his "full capacity as representative of the town party committee," was receiving reporters. Someone told me that Comrade Zhang is the secretary.

When Zhang talked about the town's 2,000-strong contingent in the service and business sector, his eyes lit up, and he said proudly, "You all know about Beijing's Wangfujing Boulevard. It is Beijing's most prosperous commercial street. There you will find 184 of our Guodun natives. It is also known as 'Guodun Street.'"

Later, he spoke in a more serious tone, "From the long-term perspective, the more workers we export, the worse off it will be for the economy at home, and compared to the advanced regions, the gap will only get bigger. Those who work in southern Jiangsu are creating wealth for the south; most of their money is taken away by the southerners."

In his office, Yancheng's mayor Xu Qiyao [1776 0366 5069] told reporters that exporting labor can promote fresh ideas. People not only make money and learn new skills, but their minds are broadened, and they become more conscious about competition and about the commodity economy.

This government official is also a high-ranking economist. He said, "Labor export promotes economic development and prosperity among the people. Today, two-thirds of the people are working in the fields, and so we must lead the surplus labor out of the fields. When they find work elsewhere, they will have income, and when they get rich, they can set up joint-household processing and develop diversified management and earn even more money, and in the future, when the economy is developed, they can come home."

Guodun Town's Secretary Zhang has actually answered his own question. Guodun Town has a labor force of 27,000 people and 92,000 mu of arable land. At an average of more than a mu per person, there is plenty of surplus labor. The town has set up 29 enterprises and the village has 10 mainstay enterprises—"the per capita income is comparable to that in farming" and they can only "absorb a little over 3,000 people." Today, just those working out-of-town in construction, remodelling, water transport, and the service industry are numbered no less than 8,000. Each year, construction work generates 14 million yuan in income.

In Chen Liang's [7115 0081] hometown, the villagers of Dagang have already figured out that of the village's 980 workers, only 500 are needed in the farms, and discounting the 100 who engage in diversified management and family-based factory work, it still leaves 380. Given their lack of funds and skills, exporting labor is one solution.

In Yancheng, Cheng Jianjiang [4453 1696 3068], assistant manager of the city's labor market, eagerly told the reporter the following story:

Xiangshui County's Zhouji Township sends its surplus labor north and south. Between the end of the year before and the beginning of last year, more than 80 women workers were sent to work in a factory in Wujiang in southern Jiangsu, and in return, the factory

set up a silk factory in Zhouji. It selected a group of mainstay workers from among the young women who had gone to work there and sent them back home, and in only a few month's time, the factory was able to get into production and showed some profit. It is fair to say that without the labor export, there would have been no new silk factory.

Zhouji village has also organized nearly 600 people from more than 200 households to set up camp in Beijing to work on wheaten food processing and services. In the first half of 1993, the net amount of money remitted through the post offices from Beijing to Zhouji increased by more than 400,000 yuan compared to the same period a year ago. Beijing's utility workers even took the initiative to install a program-controlled telephone for the village party committee.

Those with insight in Yancheng feel that people in the economically well-developed southern Jiangsu can leave the land without leaving home, but in northern Jiangsu where the economy is less well-developed, "to get rich, one solution is to export the surplus labor."

Jiangsu is a prosperous coastal province. Although it has 920,000 township enterprises which can absorb 9.06 million workers, it still has 340,000 surplus laborer to export. Of its contingent of 1.28 million construction workers, 550,000 have to find work elsewhere.

There Is Sunshine to the East and Rain to the West—by reporter Liu Jian [0491 0256]

As soon as I got back to the village, several old men from my grandfather's generation gave me the "news": A fortune-teller passing through the east end of the village exclaimed, "This village is going to get mighty rich!" Quite a few villagers believe in him, because in the last 10 years, Liujiaguanfang village has produced more than a dozen state cadres who were "champion growers." No other village came close. But still more and more of Liujiaguanfang's young men and women are leaving the village every year.

In the first few years, the village had a fairly decent industrial project—a brick factory. The factory director was hired from out-of-town. At the end of 1992, the factory and the factory director got into a lawsuit in the village, and the factory shut down, leaving the village with a sum of debts, and adding interests, today, the amount is in excess of 20,000 yuan, and adding the village's other debts, it owes no less than 300,000 yuan. With this 300,000-yuan burden, the village in fact cannot start any more collective industrial and sideline projects. First of all, it cannot get bank loans, and second, no amount of money it earns can pay off its debts.

In recent years, the village has another big burden—cotton subsidies. The village had not planted a single cotton plant in almost 20 years, but in the last two years, the higher authorities have changed their minds. Those

who plant cotton are rewarded, and those who don't are penalized. The rewards alone cost the village several hundred thousand yuan.

A few years back, the village complied with the "six complete projects" to rebuild a fancy elementary school. It was abandoned after only a few years. According to the authorities' new program, village children in first and second grades and those in third, fourth, and fifth grades are separately sent to two nearby village schools. Money invested in building schools just went down the drain.

Development of the individual economy has also run into serious problems. They do not have sufficient accumulation funds to set up factories. They can get into the tertiary industry which may be easier. But then everybody begin to come up with the same idea. A few years back, five families opened up small department stores in the village. In the tiny little village, where would the business come from? Before long, three of them went out of business. The villagers have limited purchasing power. Liu Hanming's best cigarette in his canteen is the "Qingzhou" cigarette which costs 1.2 yuan a pack. He can't sell two cartons in a year.

The most reliable is still the traditional handicrafts handed down from previous generations. The village has several old carpenters; their crafts are handed down from father to son. Today, 19 of them are making furniture for families in the county towns and nearby barracks for people who "hold government jobs." They earn a fairly good income. A carpenter's son is almost of marrying-age, and people are breaking down their door offering marriage proposals.

Another business that has attracted many young men is driving small, 12-horsepower tractors. These small tractors are inexpensive, and they can haul and plow. Liujiaguanfang already has 24 of these small tractors. Their main function is to haul bricks and gravel for the construction plants and construction units and peasant households. During the plowing season, they can also make some money by doing some plowing in their own villages. During the busy season, they can make a good sum of money, but when there is no work and the machines stop running, they must pay out of their own pockets, because they still have to pay road toll.

Another market has only just developed in recent years, and that is in the construction service industry. In the old days, when the peasants built houses, their friends and families would help out, and the host would provide the food and drinks; nobody paid money; it was a personal favor. Today, may be people have lost this kind of human touch or perhaps they are getting too mercenary, and anyway, everybody is having a difficult time, and when building houses, nobody ask their friends and relatives anymore; they hire contractors, and they negotiate prices beforehand and pay them off in one payment. Thus there is a construction team that is partly well-organized and partly not-so-well-organized, and that is a good sign.

The One, Two, Threes of Enterprises—by reporter Sun Kai [1327 0418]

Xinzhuang village's Huang Erhu [7806 0059 7579] who spends all year selling clothes in Xinjiang may be only 23 years old, but his weather-worn face says it all. He told the reporter, "There is so little land, and there are few township enterprises to give us jobs. If we don't get out and make a go at it, how are we going to survive?"

The reporter has learned that not just in Xinzhuang village but in the entire Liufeng Township there is hardly a single township enterprise. Today, most township enterprises are construction companies and construction engineering teams that work out-of-town year-round. When I asked why nobody has opened industrial enterprises there, Xinzhuang's peasants said, "We have many province-run and county-run enterprises in the county, but most are failing and can't even pay wages. What peasant would dare set up enterprises?"

Xinzhuang village's clerk, Huang Shengzhao [7806 0524 2156] is the village's learned man. He said, "To set up enterprises, one, we need money; two, we need projects; three, we need skills. When it comes to money, to be honest, Xinzhuang's people probably have some, but nowadays it is difficult to pick a good project. So many enterprises that have been around for so many years are failing. We are backward, and information is hard to come by. Who dares to run an enterprise?"

Director Zhang of Gangu County's Labor Services Office said, "We export labor and often have to travel abroad. I contacted a Hong Kong businessman. I worked hard to recruit him to invest in Gangu and build a factory here. I told him that Gangu's workers are good and abundant, and labor cost is low, and he is bound to make money if he invests and builds his factory here. But he said even if our workers worked for free, he wouldn't build a factory here. He said that our county didn't even have a direct-line telephone (it was installed at the end of 1993), and if anything should happen, he would simply worry sick. Furthermore, he has a factory in the Zhujiang Delta, and his products can get to Hong Kong in no time, and whatever new product Hong Kong has, information travels fast and he can react immediately. But to build a factory in Gangu, the products would have to be transported by train, through Baoji and then Zhengzhou and so on, and who knows when they would reach Hong Kong. That is why he would rather pay more to hire our workers to go to work in the Zhujiang Delta."

Ganzu County's party committee vice secretary, Li Pingding [2621 1627 1353] said, "The county worked hard at one time and mobilized people to set up township enterprises and collective enterprises. But at a meeting, some leading individual business units said, 'Many enterprises are failing these days. We should be careful, for if we are reckless, if we fail, it would affect some people, and so we ask the county not to be too

demanding.' The county leaders agreed with that reasoning and took Gangu's actual conditions into consideration, and that is why it is not emphasizing number but are striving to build one enterprise at a time."

Xinzhuang's peasants say, "We hear that the peasants are having no trouble setting up enterprises down south

and that they are always successful, which is something we can't measure up to. It will be great one day when we too can build that many factories, because then we will not have to suffer night and day by working away from home."

Appendix

Item/Village	Shandong: Liujiagangfang village	Gansu: Xinzhuang village	Jiangxi: Huxia village	Sichuan: Guozi village	Jiangsu: Dagang village
village's own surplus labor	300 people	more than 300	190	350	480
village-run enterprises	0	4 (construction work; work out-of-town year-round)	0	0	0
local township enterprises	5	3 (construction work; work out-of-town year-round)	13	7	29
township enterprises' employment		more than 800	2,029	142	more than 3,000 (not including those in construction and transport)
village employment	11 (not include sideline productions)	more than 10	0	0	no data

Part IV

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[Collection of essays: "An Investigative Report on China's Surplus Rural Labor Force; Exploring the Sources, Part IV—Shaking Up Life in the Countryside"]

[Text] Master of 'House of Fury'—by reporter Lu Yue-gang [4151 6460 0474]

Normally, to gather news, one would go to the county or the city first and ask the propaganda department people to escort one to the countryside and ask the township cadres to give a briefing and then let them make the arrangements and accompany one to the villages. This time I skipped the above procedure and went straight from Beijing to the most basic cells of the Chinese society.

My arrival brings quite a bit of excitement to Huxia village which normally leads a quiet life. Historically, no reporter has ever patronized Huxia, let alone stayed for a whole week.

Compared to Huxia village's branch party secretary, Guanfu village's secretary Fu Jiannian [0102 1696 1628] is more active, hot-tempered, and outspoken. In seeing Du Shuiyuan, he ignored the presence of other people and said, "Secretary Du, this year, our per capita income will at most reach 700 yuan; we won't be able to meet the 900-plus yuan goal." He has been village branch secretary for only a year. It will not be wrong to say that he fought and won the post of village branch secretary. At the beginning, everybody was surprised. A capable man who had gone out to do business and gotten rich in the

construction business has suddenly returned to hold a government post, and he even told Du Shuiyuan that if he served, he wanted to be village branch secretary in charge of the village.

I visited Zou Mugen's [6760 2606 2704] family in Huxia village's Fujianao village. His eldest son and daughter work in an electronics factory in Shenzhen. His son wrote home and ended his letter with the words "bye-bye." His parents were shocked. They asked me, "What does 'bye-bye' mean?" Compared to the shock the Guanfu villagers are experiencing, Zou Mugen's was nothing.

After wandering around for many years and having seen the world, Fu Jianning returned to the village to be branch party committee secretary. Du Shuiyuan asked about his plans. He said, "Repair the roads, build a factory, and propagate scientific and technological results." What upset the villagers most was that the village had 776 people but only 580 mu of farm, but in one stroke, he transformed 241 mu into a nursery to grow citrus fruits, loquat, peaches, and other cash crops intermingled with other grain crops. He said, "There is so little land, and if we only plant grain, it won't even be enough to feed everybody."

The peasants did not understand. They fought their way to his house and yelled obscenities at him. He pretended that he didn't hear them. Soon, he invited a scholar from town, and after three rounds of drinks, he said, "Would you write something for me?" "Write what?" "House of Fury" Bolstered by a few drinks, the scholar took a giant pen and wrote on the white wall three big one-meter-square characters.

"Why 'House of Fury'?" I asked.

"Of course I have to accomplish something big here; otherwise, why would I give up good money on the outside and come back here to this poverty-stricken village to be a branch secretary?" He said, "I'm not being arrogant, but there are too few people like me in the villages."

Not long ago, he sent me a five-year-plan to change the face of Guanfu village. He said that he would fulfill each and every one of his plans.

New Biographies of the Heroic Sons and Daughters—by reporter Mao Hao [3029 3185]

Upon entering Guozi village, the first thing that comes into sight is a yet-unfinished, four-story building. Surrounded by lower civilian homes, it stands like a crane among chickens. This building which is built according to state specifications and will soon have air-conditioners installed is the Yanlin Elementary School, named after industrialist Liu Yanlin who donated 400,000 yuan.

In Guangan county, everybody has heard of Liu Yanlin. At the station, this reporter heard the driver talked about Boss Liu getting a new car for the county mayor. In recent years, Liu has given his village nearly a million yuan. In 1992, he paid to repair the road that allowed farm machinery to move from his house to the end of the village. In 1993, Guangan went to the coastal areas to solicit business and investments. Liu indicated that he was interested in investing 10 million in a joint investment with the county to build the Guanfu building.

But Liu's mother thinks little of his son's success. "He is in small business. His work is not as stable as yours. Out there, he is like playing mahjong; he wins if he draws the right tile, and someone else wins if he doesn't." We can't blame her. In a traditional farming community, people have their own idea of a hero. This reporter looked up *Who's Who* in the Guangan County Annals. Many government officials' names are in there, followed by those in scientific and technological fields, and there are names of all kinds of skilled craftsmen, but under industries, there is only Hu Zhongshi [5170 0112 1395]. Traditionally, people only admired those with exceptional farming skills. The local people have a saying, "The business of buying and selling is just like a flower that doesn't last. It is the hoe that works the ground that yields the crop."

Liu's father was a typical country hero. He not only was a successful farmer but he was honest, sincere, and never offensive. When the younger Liu first revealed his rebellious side, he took quite a few lashes from his father. The village clan also rebuked him for being a bad son. He was not a bit like his old man; he was superficial, and he ran around all day long on his motorcycle (the kind pig-sellers ride), and hard on his heels were a bunch of creditors. This was the impression Liu Yanlin left behind when he took off. Liu simply could not stay in that environment. He left home in 1991 with 9 yuan and 2 jiao in his pocket.

"In 1985, Number Two Son came home and said he wanted to buy a brick factory and borrow 5,000 yuan from the credit cooperative. He took the note home, but neither his father nor I dared to sign the note." Liu's mother recalled. "He got married that year, and many people warned the girl against it, saying he had several hundred thousand yuan's debt out there that he had not paid off. Whoever married him would certain cry her eyes out later."

Yet only a few years later, Liu came back to Guangan with his huge economic clout, and the succession of action he took stirred the people of Guangan. They were forced to reassess him and his flaws. Liu Yanlin's elementary school teacher, Liu Huaifu [0491 0001 4395] had joined him a year earlier. He was cautious in talking about Liu: "Liu Yanlin's greatest asset is that he is bold; he is full of drive; he is never hesitant or indecisive; he is never complacent or satisfied with what he has." Teacher Liu has nothing but admiration for his former student. "Only those who have been out and about can appreciate that he deserves to get rich."

Indeed, Liu's success deeply affects the young people of Guozi village. Today, any young person who has not traveled around a bit will be considered a worthless wretch. In the last few years, Guozi villagers have gone so far as the northeast and Xinjiang, and there are scores of bosses with hundreds of thousands of yuan in assets. At the village's elementary school, I asked the children whom they admired most, and they answered in one voice, "Liu Yanlin." At the end of 1993, even though Liu's family had moved to Guangdong, he was still named first among Guangan's top ten young people.

The Same Eyes, But Shine Brighter—by reporter Sun Kai [1327 0418]

Guo Sanhu [6753 0005 5706] who has been away doing small business for seven-eight years said that having been away for a few years and coming back today, one can see that there are more and more ways to make money.

He said that in the days of the "Gang of Four," just that little bit of land couldn't produce enough to keep people alive, but they were still forced to remain on the farm and were not allowed to leave. Every year, people looked forward to the day they were paid dividends, but usually when that day came, they not only did not get anything but found out that they actually owed the brigade money. In the village some people smuggled grain from Shaanxi and sold them in the village. The leaders even led militiamen to the railway station to arrest them. People not only did not have enough to eat, they couldn't even afford to buy salt.

The truth is, what Guo Sanhu described was the history not only of Xinzhuan village. It was the epitome of the by-gone days for numerous villages in rural China.

Today, Xinzhuang's people have bid farewell to the poverty of yesterday. Going away has meant many new ways for the people to make money.

The bright ones bring Gangu's chili noodles and Chinese herbal medicine to the outside to be sold and shipped elsewhere and do some small business while they are out there. The strong ones make money in the construction teams. The old folks and the women stay home to farm what little land there is. Those who have been away and come back inevitably find many ways to make money—women who stay home can process chili noodles and do some embroidery work on the ready-made clothing they sell, or they can work on the sweaters and so on and let other people take them out and sell them. All these can bring substantial income. Old people can set up a ping-pong table, and each month they can make more money than a department-level cadre.

Different types of peasants are finding different ways to make money. Some of these money-making avenues have always been there, but they were not discovered until people started going out and their horizon began to broaden; others were created and developed only after people gained mobility.

Mobility has allowed the peasants to make lots and lots of money.

Mobility has allowed the people to look away from the land and set their sights on the broad horizon yonder.

Mobility has changed the people's concept of wealth, which is far more valuable than just giving these peasants more money.

Today One Realizes That Education Is Money—by reporter Dai Yuanzhi [2071 5913 2388]

A township enterprise in southern Jiangsu reaches across the river to recruit workers. The test for the applicants is very simple: Bring in a sewing machine and sew in the hidden pocket below the waistline on the trousers, and then the applicant leaves his or her name and identification card number. The qualified workers show up for work with their ID cards.

More and more factories are hiring working boys and girls, but they only hire the skilled ones.

There used to be a saying in Yancheng, "You can't pick up pennies without bending down." It means if one is not willing to work hard, one cannot make money.

And so everybody bend down to "scrap" money off the ground. When they first arrived in town, they thought that physical strength alone could earn them some money. But once they had to work with machines, reality taught them that physical strength alone was not enough; they needed technology and skill.

"Migratory bird," Liu Xunjun said, "This is known as 'if you ride other people's horse, you carry other people's gun'—you work for other people and you learn their

skills." Once, the workshop contractor quietly sent him to Zhangjiagang's Chengchang Township to work in a factory to install axles and repair cars while the workshop director arranged to have someone else take over his old job. He made money for the workshop, and so besides his original wage and bonus, he also made extra money. The other factory manager saw that he was a good technician and kept him there and paid him 500 yuan a month.

Life has taught him that skill is money. Work is to earn money, but without skills, there will be fewer job opportunities and one would earn less. "With skills, the world opens up."

Yet, learning a skill is not easy. When Liu first arrived at the Zhongshi Factory, he was assigned to sweep floors. He swept floors while learning from the master craftsmen. He caught up with some young men who had entered the plant before him and borrowed such technical books as "1515 Loom Repair and Maintenance Manual" and "1515 Multiple Shuttle Box Maintenance Manual." Behind his back the plant's master craftsmen said, "Let him read. He can't understand anyway." Workers who came to the plant before him also asked him, "Can you understand?"

Reading alone was not enough. When the looms broke down, he took one look before the master craftsman came to repair it, and he took another look after the repair, and after a few more tries on his own, he began to figure things out.

Chen Chao [7115 6389] had a similar experience. After he borrowed the book, he would "match everything by number" to the machine according to the book. He looked at the machine and then checked the flow chart and he clutched the books and let the master craftsmen test him. But when repairing the machines, some master craftsmen would send him away. Some would even warn him, saying, "You don't know how to do it. Don't touch."

When the machines break down, repair work is the day shift job. Chen Chao also wanted to try it. At the beginning, he was scared, afraid that he could not do it and the master craftsman would yell at him. So he read some books first and then thought about what the master would do. When he really couldn't do it, the next day he went to the master craftsman to apologize. The teacher saw that he was willing to learn and did not give him a hard time.

"Three months after I arrived, I was doing the day shift, but after dinner, I would also work the swing shift. I wanted to learn to repair cone winders. Someone in that shift was also from northern Jiangsu. He had been there for more than a year. He told my master, 'Don't let him come.' It turned out that this man was negotiating with the unit, and he figured that if someone else learned the skill, his deal with the unit would fall through."

Today, in Chen Chao's factory dormitory, he still has *Cotton Spinning, Carding Machine Repair Manual* and other technical books by his bedside.

Lu Ningdong [4151 1380 2639] the "migratory bird" who worked in a construction company and ended up losing his job also worked hard to learn a skill, and ultimately he made good and became the platform car brigade leader. The workshop director even let him contract his work. He said after he began contracting he wanted to quit two lowing-paying "basic jobs" in the city, but the workshop supervisor would not let him and gave him a 50-yuan-a-month raise instead. Of course with the raise came more responsibilities. Without skill, how could he have made an extra 50 yuan a month?

At the Xinsu Machinery Factory where Chen Liang [7115 0081] works, the young men from Yangzhou's Tiaxing who are certified technicians who have "fourth-level knowledge plus third-level know-how" have a competitive edge over the young men from Yancheng's Funing and are hot commodities in the factories.

Among the Funing youths, those who are smart already realize that skill is money. When Chen Liang returned to the village, he talked about a young "combination factory worker and peasant" in his workshop who had once been "foolish": This young man asked to extend his apprenticeship for another month so that he could learn more from the master. The workshop was fairly open-minded and did not keep him to his quota for that month so that he could fully learn his skills. Today, among the two groups of 80 young workers from Funing, the first 10 who passed the tests have been upgraded by half a grade in pay by the factory.

After throwing away the scythe, if one truly wants to pick up the hammer, one must have skills. A Jiangsu Provincial Labor Bureau official told me that today, Nantong has added an educational course called "Employment Guide" for the graduating middle and high school classes. This year, Jiangsu has handed down its guidance-oriented plan to the labor exporting localities asking them to provide training for 340,000 people.

Looking Forward To Autumn In Spring—by reporter Liu Jian [0491 0256]

Forty-eight-year-old Liu Zaitian [0491 0961 3944] was probably the youngest kid in Liujiaguanfang village to learn to write with a brush. He is very smart, but unfortunately, he only went as far as finishing elementary school. In 1977, Heilongjiang Province's Qitaihe Mining Bureau was recruiting many full-time miners. His older brother who had long planted roots in Qitaihe asked someone to send in an application for him, and when everything was arranged, he took off. A few years later, his whole family moved to Qitaihe, and henceforth they would no longer be Shandong people.

This is Liujiaguanfang's typical emigration story. Those who have no luck will always come home no matter how long they have been away. Those who come back are

back, and those who come back first should not regard those who come back later as "extraterrestrials," and those who have just returned will get rid of their little bit of northeastern accent after ten days or half a month, and then basically they become "one of the crowd" and go back to do what they have been doing all along.

As for people who had been away but have returned to the village to hold government posts and change the village, occasionally one may read about them in the newspaper in Liujiaguanfang. The village's rule is that those who are village cadres or have a chance of becoming village cadres obviously will not go "wandering around," and generally speaking, those who did go out have very little hope of returning to serve as officials.

At first, many who left Liujiaguanfang did so because they owed people money or were trying to stay out of debt. But this situation no longer holds true today. Since 1992, young people who have no debts and whose families are fairly well-off have been leaving simply because they want to earn more money. When I returned home to gather materials for this story, a fairly well-off elderly lady in the village asked me to pull strings for his son so he could get his driver's license, because the line for driver's license examination was too long at the local traffic police training center. Five or six young kids from the village have already obtained their "driver's licenses" and have gone to nearby Linyi and Rizhao to make money driving cars, and some have even gone to Jiaodong Peninsula. They clearly make more money than the others. They have not been gone for long, and it is not likely that they will be returning home soon.

In a place like Liujiaguanfang, if one can find a job at a state-owned or collective enterprise in the nearby towns and townships, it is considered something to be proud of. This is different from venturing out to the northeast. Anybody can get out to the northeast, and anybody out there can find a job, good or bad. But to be able to go to work in an enterprise or an institution in the city, county, or even the township (even as a driver) is something else. It requires pulling strings. Scarce goods are always better. Even though one can clearly make more money working in the northeast than at home, at home one does not have to go down to the coal pits and suffer.

From the point of future impact on these small villages, those who move about in nearby cities and towns will have greater impact than those who venture out east of Shanhaiguan. Almost 70 percent of those who go to the northeast end up in Qitaihe, Shuangyashan, Jixi, Hegang, and Daxinganling and Xiaoxinganling and other mining towns and forest areas to do work that requires sheer physical labor. Shandong's workers have little opportunity of getting into even construction work. Over there, the civilian construction market belongs to the Jiangsu people. That is why although they travel far, their horizon may be broaden at most to the extent of knowing that at the end of several thousand kilometers

of railway line lies a mine or a huge forest. Moreover, the northeast is a region with the oldest tradition of planned economy.

The young people who do not stray too far from home are different. Almost all of them are also engaged in physical labor, but they are in Linyi, Rizhao, Jinan,

Qingdao, and Yantai, and they directly observe life in another world. They are fully stimulated. When these people (and not those who venture out to the northeast) decide to go back to the villages, will they create a "revolution"?

Appendix

Item/Village Name	Gansu: Xinzhuang village	Jiangxi: Huxia village	Sichuan: Guozi village	Jiangsu: Dagang village	Shandong: Liujianguanfang village
per capita annual income for household without mobile worker	(family of 3) 480 yuan	(family of 4) -30 yuan	(family of 5) 650 yuan	(family of 4) 500 yuan	430 yuan
per capita annual income for household with one mobile worker	(family of 3) 1,440 yuan	(family of 4) 750 yuan	(family of 3) 980 yuan	(family of 3.5, paying half of the mother's living expense) 600 yuan	1,280 yuan
per capita annual income for household with two mobile workers	(family of 5) 1,200 yuan	(family of 5) 900 yuan	(family of 3) 1,833 yuan	(family of 6) 920 yuan	
per capita annual income for household with three mobile workers	(family of 5) 1,920 yuan		(family of 5) 1,560 yuan		
per capita annual income for household with all mobile workers	(family of 5) 3,000 yuan		(family of 2) 2,600 yuan		

(Note: One sample only of each category from each of the five villages. No consideration is given to the types of employment of the non-mobile labor.)

Part V

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[Collection of essays: "An Investigative Report on China's Surplus Rural Labor Force; Exploring the Sources, Part V—Torn Between Coming and Going"]

[Text] The Ambivalent "Amphibians"—by reporter Mao Hao [3029 3185]

Ou Cunyu [2962 1407 3254] is acknowledged to be Guozi village's most able man. Unfortunately, when I visited the village, he was away on a buying trip. His family members said he goes on these trips for two to three months every year. In Guozi village, there are already several of these "amphibians" who have one foot in the city and the other in the village.

Ou was in the army, and after his discharged, he became village cadre (company commander of the village militia). In the 1980's, he was among the first to leave the village to work on the outside. Lately he has accumulated substantial amount of money and experience and has forged personal ties at work which prompted him to turn around and head back to the village to take up the pig-feed additive business. Usually he stays home to tend to his farm, and when farm work is slow, he goes on his business trips. Some of his business is all the way out in

Guangdong. Today, his is the best house in the village (repaired once when he was still working for others and repaired again when he got into business for himself). Many in Guozi village who have dreams of becoming well-off are envious of him.

Yang Shicheng [2789 0013 7022] is another of such "amphibians." His business is a mixed-bag—he picks up whatever there is to do. When the reporter visited him at his house, he was just buying up the local oranges to ship them out-of-town. "This is but my odd job. My main business out there is in lumber. There is money to be made out there everyday, and coming home, I find it uncomfortable to be idle all day long. Everybody wants to make money." Perhaps having been out and about in the world has given him a better sense and better judgment about commodities; Yang is clearly ahead of everybody else.

Even though most people who have retired and gone back to the villages are those who had left early and had reaped substantial profit, the material and cultural differences between town and country and their anxiety about future competition still make them ambivalent about returning to their ancestral homes like fallen leaves returning to their roots. Like "amphibians," they don't know where they really belong.

Shao Yuanshou [6730 0337 1108] and Liu Yanlin left the village at about the same time. He has gone through

14 provinces and municipalities. Today, he is home taking care of some sideline business. Because he is very skillful, he can make 300-400 yuan a month weaving bamboo. In talking to the reporter, he sighed and said, "I have never wanted to live in the city permanently. I was not born for that kind of life. But having been out there to see the sights and experience the fun, I am not satisfied with being back here again. Life is hard out there. There is always someone looking over your shoulders, and even when the wind is blowing and the snow is falling, you still have to go to work. But there is one good thing about it: Usually, the harder you work, the more money you make. You can figure it out for yourself. Moreover, it makes a difference if you are skilled, and so it forces one to learn. At the beginning, I could not adapt to city life. People are yelling at you and ordering you around all day long, and everything is so rigid. But now that I am back home, I can't get used to things here either. You may be free here, but you have nothing to do all day, and you have no steady income. Here in the village, besides watching TV, there is no other form of entertainment. If you have never experienced life on the outside, you will never think about it, but once you had a taste of it but can't get it anymore, it is hard to take. Is this ironic or what?"

A Step Ahead of the Others—by reporter Da Yuanzhi [2071 5913 2388]

Let us return to Chen Liang's home and listen to his story.

Those who know Chen Liang know that he failed to get a job in Suzhou's Wuxian County and Shanghai's Chongming one year. When he returned to the village, mentally he went through a very difficult period.

The closer he got to his home, the more he worried about running into people he knew, and the more he worried, the more people he ran into.

On the boat to the village, he ran into a relative.

"How come you are back?" He detested that question the most.

"Coming home to visit the family."

Those who left always come home "in their silken robes"—a sign of success—clutching gift packages of all sizes, but Chen had lost his job and was kind of ashamed to come home to face the village elders and worried even more about others suspecting that he had done something wrong and that was why he was fired.

Later, whenever he left the village, he would put on a pair of sunglasses.

He and his father wanted to contract or buy the village's plastic factory which had shut down earlier, but the deal fell through because the price was not right. The factories in the township were beyond their reach, and some were not that profitable.

His father recalled that back then, whenever they had time, they would search for a newspaper to read.

People always look down on young people who are still living at home.

"One must get ahead, just like knives must be sharpened. You should go out to see the world." Chen Liang said, "When you are out there, even in your dreams, you dream about working alongside your father and washing clothes beside your mother." Even if the food is plain and the tea coarse, they are still sweet. "There is an inexplicable tenderness about them." But he still wants to get away.

"You know, my parents have kept me for more than 20 years. It just doesn't feel right to spend another cent of my father's money. To earn more money and find more business is the best way to repay my parents. That was why I left when I had a chance."

Of course people look for work away from home in order to make money. But "city life has its attractions too. Sitting at home makes one feel as if one is looking at the sky from the bottom of a well."

"Listening to tapes at home is no longer fun. Life in the village is too monotonous. One has to go 4 li just to catch a movie; there are no karaoke, no books, no song and dance shows that one likes. Before, I would watch other people dance on TV, but I didn't know how. Today, even I can dance a little—not that I think about dancing all the time or dance away all my free time."

"There is no room for me in the village." Upon saying that, Chen felt that he had mis-spoken himself. He thought for a while and corrected himself, saying, "There is no future here."

Chen Liang left several times and came back several times. His father said, "If he hadn't leave, his sister couldn't leave."

It turned out that when Chen Liang sister failed to find a job in Kunshan, it was Chen Liang who found a place for her at the Wuxi Textile Goods Research Institute's Zhongshi Factory not far from his own work place."

"What young people would want to remain at home?" Chen Liang's younger sister who had just graduated from middle school interjected.

Her grandmother chided her, "You wish your brother would come home tomorrow and leave on the next day. How terrible."

"Water drains down; people heads up. People absolutely want that work permit."

Usually after one person leaves a village, others will follow. Dagang's villagers told me that none of those who have left have returned.

Secretly Giving Him the Thumbs-Up—by reporter Liu Jian [0491 1696]

Liujiaguanfang's peasants are not satisfied with making some money on the outside to feed the family. They want to get the "green card" to the "new world." People here are very keen about "emigrating."

The reason the peasants from the Liujiaguanfang area often go out to the northeast, besides the fact that they are familiar with the place and have friends and relatives there, is that household registration is less strict and outsiders are usually allowed to settle there.

One's highest ideal of course is to get an official post. Two li away from Liujiaguanfang is Zhangjiaguanfang. In 1963, Ji Qingren [4764 1987 0088] left the village for Heilongjiang's Qitaihe. Today, Ji is the head of Qitaihe's City mines as well as its party committee secretary. Everybody in Qitaihe City knows his nickname "Ji Dahu—Tiger Ji." When he arrived in the coal pits, he truly "worked hard and sweated hard," and soon became a model production trooper. In 1973, he was promoted to deputy head of the mine; it took him only 10 years. Today he is in charge of more than 3,800 workers; he is a county-level cadre and is Qitaihe's number one entrepreneur. Most of Liujiaguanfang's peasants who venture out to the northeast are trying to follow in Ji's example; they just don't want to admit it.

If one can't make it as a cadre, a lesser goal is to become an official employee in a state-owned enterprise and live on the "state's payroll." Dozens in Liujiaguanfang have succeeded with this approach. In fact, in the more than 40 years since the founding of the PRC, most of those in Liujiaguanfang village who have managed to get on the state's payroll had started on in the northeast. Liu Huitian [0491 2585 3944], a young trooper who ventured out to Qitaihe alongside Ji Qingren in 1963 and engaged in the same death-defying struggles in the same pit with him, has now settled in Qitaihe with his family, all legal and proper. Last year, having been away from the village for 30 years, he took his wife and children back home to visit his ancestors' graves. They set off enough firecrackers to litter the whole street. Though not the grandest by comparison, his was nevertheless a glorious homecoming, sufficient to make his ancestors proud.

Only a handful can triumphantly land in the "new world." Most return home to Liujiaguanfang village after three to five months or even three to five years, upon making some money here and there. Eighty percent of Liujiaguanfang's male between the ages of 30 and 60 fall into this category. They either had little luck or had just missed the opportunities, or they have simply lost the patience to "wait a little while longer" after waiting and waiting for a long time. Like those workers who go overseas to work, they make some hard-earned money and head home. They are neither success stories nor are they failures.

No matter where the Liujiaguanfang villagers go, and no matter how far they travel, their standard for success or failure is still Liujiaguanfang's standard and not the "new world's" standard. They seem to have eyes on their backs.

Books Make People Ambitious—by reporter Sun Kai [1327 0418]

When I arrived at Huang Xiaomin's [7806 2556 2404] house, they had just finished cleaning house and had just started a large frying pan to heat some honey. They told me that they were getting ready to make some local yellow wine to celebrate an important occasion.

Twenty-four-year-old Huang was getting married in a few days, but he looked rather sad. Huang joined a construction brigade two years ago upon graduating from high school. Today, he has traveled a long way home for his wedding.

He said, "After graduating from high school, I didn't make it to college, but I still felt good about myself. I still believed that I could accomplish something. I have always loved to write, and I figured that with my education, I could always make some money. But once out there, I realized how naive I was."

In the construction brigade, he was an unskilled labor just like any other civilian worker. He worked more than 10 hours a day. He has been to Xinjiang and Qinghai. During the day, he set tiles, and at night, when the others laid in bed chatting with one another, he would play the flute or read a book about tile-setting, and only at that time would it become apparent that he was an educated man. He also admitted that because he was educated, the team leaders and others always looked up to him.

He said, "Actually I would still like to go back to school. If my family had money, I would like to get another year of schooling. But having worked out there for a couple of years has its merits. At least I am more mature. When I first went out there, I was vain. I never ventured out of the construction site and was too embarrassed to meet people. Now I am a changed man."

At one time, Huang Xiaomin submitted some articles to the newspapers and magazines. He did not even get a letter of rejection. He also tried getting into business for himself but was too shy to talk to people. So he ended up becoming an unskilled laborer.

Today, after having wandered around for two years, marriage has brought him back to the village. The outside world is illusive, and the air in the village is oppressive. His worries about the future keeps bearing down on him.

He said, "After the wedding, I am sure I will have to stay home for a while, and I am sure I will not be able to accomplish much at home. So I am sure I will leave again."

He said, "I have to get out there and do something for my father and mother and everybody to see, to make society acknowledge my worth. One day, if I manage to accomplish something big, I will return and change the face of this village."

Torn Between Coming and Going—by reporter Lu Yuegang [4151 6460 0474]

Two things bothered me incessantly while I was staying in Huxia village. The first was insomnia, because of the rats, and the other was the language problem.

Huxia village's grain silos used to be built out of reed or wood. No one knows when the rats began to run amuck. What is interesting is that instead of working together to rid the village of rats, every family began to build cement silos. Even if the rats had steel fangs, they couldn't chew through the cement walls. Starving rats are everywhere, and they gnaw at anything that they can sink their teeth into. Sometimes, a foot-long rat would crawl along the bed-rail. They would look straight into your eyes, showing no fear at all. What can you do?

People speak the Hu native dialect here. Outsiders simply can't understand them. Fortunately, I had Zou Binzi [6760 2430 1311] to interpret for me.

Actually, Zou is around because of this piece of poverty-stricken land. He was in the military police army for 3 years and joined the Party while serving. After he returned home, he wanted to do something big, but every time he returned home full of hope he was forced to leave full of despair. It was as if there was no room for him on that piece of land. He worked as a hired hand everywhere. He worked hard. He went all over the country, but he always felt that he had an unfulfilled dream. In July 1993, he drummed up enough courage to write Wu Guanzheng [0702 1351 2973], governor of Jiangxi Province, a letter in which he said, "Upon returning to the village, I wanted to embark on the road to riches along with my fellow villagers. But alas there was 'no room for a hero to display his prowess' there." He went on to make some good suggestions about many rural projects.

His letter was forwarded from the province to Yichuan Prefecture and from the prefecture to Zhangshu City and then to Huangtugang Town, from level to level, and eventually the town's leader met with him. This kind of sensationalism only invited the villagers' criticism.

Another failure. He was forced to go to work in Guangdong: First, he could avoid further criticisms, and second, he could make some money to support himself.

He told me that as far as Huxia village is concerned, there are only two kinds of resources: the land and the surplus labor. In particular, he said that the land has not been properly utilized. He showed me his plan. He pointed to a field at the foothill and said, "There are more than 40 mu of red-loam, low-yield farms. Planting rice will yield only several hundred jin. If we do some excavating, it will be a perfect place for ecology-based breeding [SHENGTAI YANGZHI]."

Ecology-based breeding techniques can be brought in from the outside, but who will put up the 40 to 50,000 yuan in initial investments? It will be harder to get the money than to get into heaven.

In early February, I received a letter from Zou. He said that upon parting with me in Nanchang, he thought about starting an all-purpose agricultural development company, but his family was dead against it. The reason was quite simple: they did not have the means to support him.

He is already 26 years old. In the village, the pressure is already unbearable if one is still not married at that age. Even worse is, what is he going to do with himself? He plays mahjong during the day, and at night, there is no electricity, so he goes to bed early. Is this the way to fritter one's life away?

Should he go out to work again? Once Spring Festival is over, he will have to make a decision. He must be torn between coming and going at this point.

Appendix

Item/Village	Shandong: Liujiaguanfang village	Gansu: Xinzhuang village	Jiangxi: Huxia village	Sichuan: Guozi village	Jiangsu: Dagang village
Number of mobile workers	210	more than 300	35	310	200
Workers who have returned (never to leave again)	0 (excluding those who returned before 1992)	0	0	16	
(Returned workers) in nonagricultural sector	employment mix of people who returned before 1992 is the same as those who never left	0	0	3 in business, 2 others	
Number of people returning to agriculture	same as above	0	0	11	

Part VI

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[Collection of essays: "An Investigative Report on China's Surplus Rural Labor Force; Exploring the Sources, Part VI—What the Peasants Themselves Have To Say"]

[Text] This part was originally entitled "Developmental Plans For the Year 2000 For the Towns and Townships Where the Villages In This Report Are Located." But in the course of investigation, it was discovered that Gansu's Liufeng township where Xinzhuzhuang village is located and Shandong's Guanfang township where Liujiaoguanfang is located had no plans. Jiangsu Province's Hengsheng town where Guozi village is located only has a plan for the current term of the government (three years). Meanwhile by the year 1995, Hengsheng town's total income is expected to reach 32.965 million yuan, 49.1 percent more than in 1992. At the end of the Eighth Five-Year period, Goudun town's GVIOA [Gross Value of Industrial and Agricultural Output] is expected to double that of 1993's, surpassing 600 million yuan. Jiangxi's Huangtugang town where Huxia village is located projects that by the year 2000, each village under its jurisdiction should have an income of 100,000 yuan.

Huxia Village Branch Secretary Zou Chungen [6760 1504 2704] Says: "Go And Take a Look First"—by reporter Lu Yuegang [4151 6460 0474]

In discussing Huxia's future, the village branch secretary Zou Chungen said, "There is no stability without agriculture; there is no wealth without industry."

How is agriculture doing?

He said, "China's grain supply is still tight. The peasants don't want to see grain prices go up. We have an analogy: Grain is the water and industrial products are the boats, and if the water rises, the boats rise along with it, and how much money will truly end up in the peasants' hands? Moreover, the authorities want to see the per capita income increase every year. We have no sideline productions or industries in the village. How do we make our income go up? The authorities won't like the numbers we show them, and so we simply don't report anything and just stamp the village's seal and let them fill in whatever they want." (Note: According to the town party committee secretary, Du Shuiyuan, the higher authorities have asked the town for an 80-yuan increase in per capita income for 1993, and the localities have asked for another 20 yuan, making it a total of 100 yuan. This is known as "talking strategy on paper—just words.") He is probably exaggerating.

"There is no wealth without industry." He said, "In here, even if we worked for free, investors would not come here to invest. Enterprises need electricity. We don't even have electricity to cook dinner, hull rice, or for a television set. Who is going to invest here? (Note: Every

household in Huxia has electricity for lighting, but I was there for eight days, and lights were lit for only a few hours in all.)

"Agriculture can barely keep people warm and fed. We have surplus labor, but various constraining factors have kept us from setting up enterprises, and so we must ship out the surplus labor instead. But who wants them? We have strength but no place to spend it. Furthermore, the peasants here have no skill. Technical training requires investments. Who will pay? I figure that the village has more than 1,000 people and there are only four cement and tile setters, two carpenters, six bamboo weavers, one tailor, one blacksmith, and one barber. They total 19 people, young and old. It is written in our Zou's Family Annals, 'Only with a generation of talents can there be a generation of undertakings. A generation's undertakings rely on a generation of talents.' Where has our generation of talents gone?"

Developing rural productive forces is easier said than done. We will have to take one step at a time."

Ping Yuanbiao [1627 0337 2871], President of Dagang's Village Committee, Says, "First You Want To Leave, Then You Want To Come Home"—by reporter Dai Yuanzhi [2071 0337 2871]

Not far from the bridge in the heart of the village are the offices of Dagang's village committee and village branch party committee. The village's office on crackdowns, family planning committee, joint defense brigade and other village-level organs, and the radio station and health center are all located there.

Ping Yuanbiao, president of the villagers' committee, has been in office for only one month. He told this reporter that the village is within the Huanghuaihai Plains Planned Development Zone. Most of the village's low-lying paddy fields are susceptible to waterlogging.

He said that without sufficient labor input, each mu of land will be lucky to just break even. Today, the main approach is to diversify, like planting lake mulberry and raising ducks, sheep, pigs, and aquatic products and so on. Raising poultry earns more money than farming, and aquatic products make more money than poultry. The village has 446 households and 1,768 people. Each household has an average of 1 mu of mulberry. There are 250 mu of water for breeding aquatic products along the interior rivers, and there are plans for a 100-mu fishpond. Among the aquatic products, specialty products make the most money but require some input and special techniques. Labor export, however, requires little outlay and is one way for the village to get rich.

The village has a tradition of emphasizing education and learning. Since 1989, the village has raised funds for the schools each year. This reporter noticed that it has built a little pavilion for the elementary school and has given it land for a fishpond. An elderly man helped Ping Yuanbiao figure out that the village has produced five college students, two polytechnic school graduates, around 25 high school graduates, and 130-140 middle school graduates.

President Ping told me that in 1990, the village ran a 70-80,000 yuan deficit, and today, it still has over 10,000 yuan in deficits. The village-run factory has shut down, and it now only has a few household-run factories.

The accountant has figured out that the village has 1,950 mu of land and 980 workers, nearly 600 of them work at home, in the farms, or engage in diversified management; more than 200 work elsewhere year-round; more than 100 hold temporary jobs. This still leaves around 80 surplus workers.

The village party branch secretary, Lao Xu, said that the village has more people than land, and even if they had more land, it wouldn't earn much. People are not enthusiastic about farming. More than 40 percent of those who leave the village are young people; they have had at least middle school education and with that they have more confidence in themselves.

President Ping took me on a bike-ride around the village. Chen Jiaxin [7115 1367 2450] has a family of four; no family member works outside the village. They have 12-13 mu of land, 4 of which they use to plant cotton. Each year they raise 10 chickens and four pigs, and their per capita net income is 500 yuan. Wang Dengrong's [3769 4098 2837] family has one member working elsewhere; their per capita income is more than 600 yuan. Chen Jiawang [7115 1367 3076] has a family of four; two are farmers and two are workers out-of-town, and their annual net income is 1,500 yuan higher.

It seems that besides letting the workers who are staying in the village grow more grain and cotton, they must let some of the surplus labor shift to diversified management, especially to breed specialty aquatic products, and meanwhile continue to export the remaining surplus labor. This probably is the main direction of the village leaders' future plans. Working for others is a way to escape poverty and attain wealth and accumulate funds for setting up enterprises in the future. It is also a way to explore future projects (including learning about information, technologies, management, raw materials, and sales channels). This is the village's guiding ideology for encouraging labor export.

But I was told that none of those who had left have returned.

On the morning of my departure, the landlord woke me up. The cock was crowing. Before I boarded the boat, I took one last look at the village. I hope one day some people will "return to cause a revolution here." Let Dagang, "a land where a cockcrow wakes three counties' people", rise up; let the villagers get rich even faster.

Xinzhuang Village's Branch Secretary Gong Wanfu [7255 5502 4395] Says, "Cities Don't Belong Only to the City Folks"—by reporter Sun Kai [1327 0418]

"To tell the truth, those who go out to work as common laborer and suffer are people without ability, that is, they are us peasants. They can do nothing else and have no

choice, so they must go to the city to do what other people are not willing to do in order to make a little money," said Gong Wanfu, Xinzhuang village's branch party committee.

"Things were terrible a few years ago. The village was so poor it couldn't even afford to buy a piece of paper and the people didn't have enough sorghum noodle to eat. It was at that time that we began exporting labor, and things began to improve slowly."

Gong said, "When I read the newspaper, sometimes they say that too many of our peasants go to the cities and create public security problems for the cities. Our own village people come back and say the same thing. I myself often go to town and feel the same way. This is a law enforcement problem. But I also feel that some city people tend to thumb their noses at the people from the villages. Actually, cities do not belong to the city folks alone. They are part of the state and belong to the village people too. Just like in our village, when the elder son repairs the house and the younger son moves in and later the elder son wants to move back into the house and the younger son is upset, but in fact it was the elder son who repaired the house and not the younger son."

"No matter how you look at it, city people do benefit more from the state. If you don't believe me, ask the state to repair the roads or build a theater or a park in our village so that we can be better than the city." Gong lit a cigarette and went on, "Xinzhuang village has money. We just don't want to show it. The shabbier a person looks, the richer he may be. The rich wear cheap clothes, and the poor wear good clothes. In my village, at least a dozen families have more than 100,000 yuan, at least a dozen have 50-60,000 yuan, and three or four families have 200-300,000 yuan or 300-400,000 yuan. No less than a hundred families have 20-30,000 or 30-40,000 yuan. Believe it or not. I have no reason to exaggerate."

Gong said, "Village people don't like to show their wealth. They won't tell you the truth. They don't want to part with their money. They don't eat good food or wear expensive clothes; some don't even go to the bank—they don't put the money in the bank but prefer to put it in a jar and bury it in the ground. They are different from city folks. City people who have some money will invest it or have fun. We village people have to work hard to earn our money, and we don't want to part with it."

"City people nevertheless are more cultured; they have experienced more and seen more. We in the village have our advantages. We can have fresh vegetables anytime; we have our own land to grow things, and we don't have to pay. It is just that we country people are kind of dumb, a bit shortsighted, and kind of narrow-minded."

In talking about his future plans, he said, "This village's future is fairly limited. There is less land and more people everyday. The village's own cement factory has shut down. We mainly have to turn to the outside."

"If we have nothing to do, we will fix the village roads and then add a large well. That is our plan for the next two years."

Liujiaguanfang's Village Branch Secretary Liu and President Liu Say, "Not Enough Ways To Make Money."—by reporter Liu Jian [0491 1696]

Forty-eight-year-old Liu Jinghan [0491 2529 3352] returned to the village in the 1970's after serving in the army. A few years later he joined the party branch group and became secretary early last year. Liu Hengye [1854 0673], who was in his early 20's in 1971 also joined the party branch at the same time and has been president of the village committee for more than a decade.

While I was interviewing them, the loudspeaker outside was broadcasting, "A few households have not paid their electric bills. Pay them now. You are fussing over a little electric bill. Don't fuss."

"We are in a most difficult time. The village debts will not be easily paid off. If we didn't have the cotton responsibility, it would have been easier. But we still have to plant this year's cotton. The village owes money for it, and the citizens don't feel like planting cotton. Isn't it terrible? In recent years, the higher authorities want the citizens to plant several things, and you will be fined if you don't. They insist that we plant yellow tobacco, and when the authorities come to procure the tobacco, they cheat at the scales. Secretary Li of the village party committee has personally arrested some of them. This year, we still have to plant it."

Other matters such as fund collection and retention are better left unsaid.

Those not leaving the village but are staying home will have to depend on breeding and planting to make a living. Individual families may raise pigs or chickens. Growing crops doesn't pay and even if one makes some money, it is negligible. In the old days when we were learning from Dazhai, we weren't even allowed to leave the village. Those who moved about illegally would find their families being dragged to study lessons or even to the communes and fined. But in fact that had not stopped the people from moving. Not long ago, there was another round [of prohibitions]: Those who wanted to leave had to have a letter from the county government before they could purchase a train ticket. The railroads couldn't handle them all. In recent years, there have been no more attempts to stop the people. Anyone who wants to leave may leave. We neither encourage nor discourage them. Whoever makes the money is entitled to pocket the money. We have no sideline production, and the little bit of land is not enough for growing anything, and that is why people want to leave. Today, one may not see a young person in the village all day. Anybody who can leave have left.

Just say that there is a way to make money and the people will go crazy. Making a little money is better than

none. But there are just not enough ways to make money. It is easier said than done. Tell me, where would one make money these days?

The biggest difference between today and the old days is that everybody is basically warm and fed today. Before the re-allocation of land, people mostly lived on yam stalks and didn't even have enough of that to eat. Each commune member had 10-20 jin of wheat a year; some had to sell that in order to get more yam stalks. Today, most families' staple food is noodles. In the past, half the people who left the village left because they were hungry. Today, they leave for money. The people live one day at a time. In the long-run, they will only grow stronger."

Guozi Village's Branch Secretary Liu Bencheng [0491 2609 2052] Says, "People Always Want To Move Up. Why Stop Them?"—by Mao Hao [3029 3185]

I interviewed Liu Bencheng, the village branch secretary, in a small grocery store at one end of Guozi village.

"To tell the truth, today, nobody wants to be a cadre. All the smart people have left the village. I am useless, and that is why I am standing around like a stick (a little humor here.) A few years ago, everybody kept their eyes on the steelyard (referring to their grain allotment). Today, with their ID cards, they can go anywhere they please. You can't even stop them. At first, we were willing to heed the authorities to stop the people. But then we figured, we couldn't solve their problems, so why stop them? People always want to move upward, just like water always flows downward. Want to tie them up?

To tell you the truth, my four sons and two daughters-in-law all work on the outside. They stay out for a month and can make enough to buy a year's grain. In 1984, when the system of setting farm output quota for each household was implemented, grain production doubled, which more or less ended the practice of reselling government-procured grain to feed the people, but it was still impossible to rely on agriculture to make the people well-off. We tried. In 1990, I made a come-back and was determined to do something big. That winter, the village people planted an average of 600 mulberry trees per person and instantly increased the number of sheets of paper with silkworm eggs from 27 to 265. The county's silkworm and mulberry work committee was started here. The entire county came to tour the village. Impressive enough for you? But when they came to collect the cocoons, the silkworm stations refused to buy up everything. The contracted price of 9 jue per jin had to be lowered to 7 jue. The procurement was completed later only when urged by the town's party committee and the town government. They still owe us 4,800 yuan today. The people were upset. Last year, there were attempts to destroy the mulberry trees.

To be fair, we can't blame it all on the silkworm stations. When it comes to farm work, we are dependent on nature. That year, the village people who sold mulberry and cocoons made 150 yuan per person, which was not bad. But at year-end, those who had left the village to

work came home (people left en masse beginning in 1989,) and upon figuring and comparing the numbers, that little bit of income came to less than one-tenth of what the others made on the outside. People who have left in recent years are coming back with their wives to build new houses. Now, that is heavy stuff. We can't measure up.

In my experience, working on the outside won't last. Things will change later. Everybody is out there trying to make a bundle while they still can, and if you are stupid enough to stick around the farm, you will regret it later. Today, many young people don't even come home for Spring Festival. They are afraid that they may not be able to find work later. The kids are having a tough time out there. I know. Well, there is nothing good about the peasants except that they can endure hardship. I

encourage every young person in the village to get out there to see the world. That is why I always issue a permit to anyone who asks.

Of course, the draining of manpower is not without its problems. I am a village branch secretary. 'Deceiving those above me and bullying those below me' is an honest day's work (a little humor here). But I feel that like it or not, it is already a fact that most young workers have gone out to find work; we can no longer pretend that we don't know about it. But we need clear regulations on issues such as the transfer of contracted land. The kind of private negotiation we have going on today is not a solution. I always feel that working for others out there is not a permanent solution. The young people will come back home. If Gouzi village really wants to get rich, it must have its own township enterprises.

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